

Sep/Oct 2022

The specialist international magazine for theme parks and FECs

# InterPark

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## Fønix Rises to Thrill!

**Open to Question**  
Victoria Lynn,  
Drayton Manor, UK

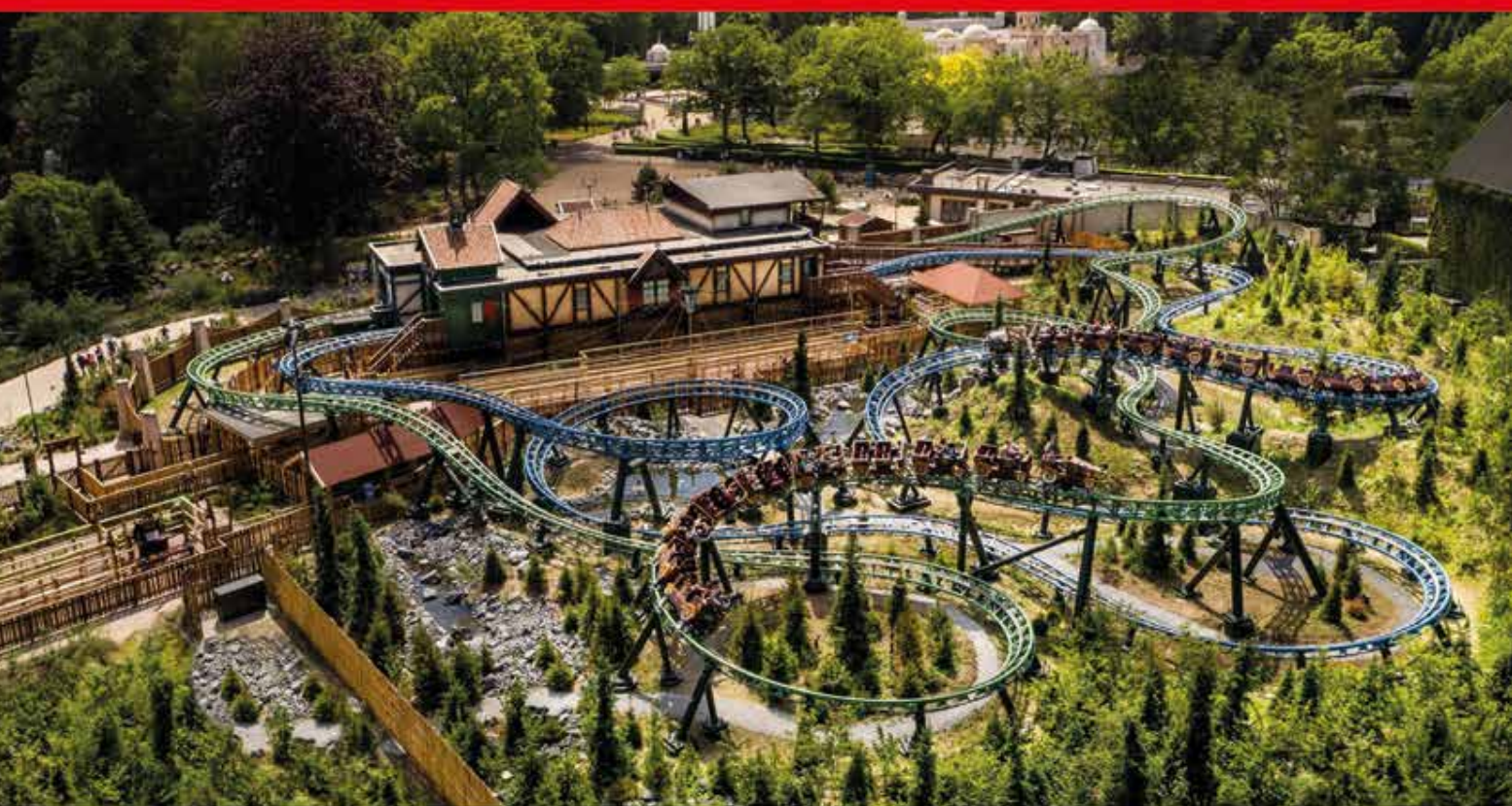
**Feature**  
Jumanji: the Adventure  
Gardaland, Italy

**Park Life**  
Portaventura World,  
Spain





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On the front cover:

Fonix, Fårup Sommerland, Denmark

## Welcome to the autumn edition of InterPark magazine.

Welcome to the autumn edition of InterPark magazine.

For those of you on the operations side, the madness of summer season will have, by now, started its wind down as families get back to the day-to-day of school and work life. Hopefully you have all had a successful season and you are beginning to see those pre-pandemic visitor figures return! Personally, I had the pleasure of visiting Alton Towers and Blackpool Pleasure Beach in the UK with my family this summer; it was my son's first experience of theme parks and neither park failed to disappoint! He took his very first coaster ride aboard the Alice in Wonderland ride at the Pleasure Beach and got to meet some of his TV heroes at Cbeebies Land, Alton Towers, including Duggee – as you can see! It was great to see so many families enjoying both resorts while we were there and thankfully the British weather held up on both occasions! Let's hope the guests continue to pour in as we now enter Halloween season!

Now, on to the magazine. We've got some great ride features for you this issue, including dark ride Jumanji: The Adventure, which recently opened at Gardaland in Italy; and the Fonix coaster, which opened at Farup Sommerland in Denmark. Both rides have been greeted by fans with much fanfare and discovering the amount of care and attention to detail that went into both rides makes for a fascinating read!

We also profile Portaventura World in Spain this issue. One of the largest holiday and family leisure destinations in Europe throughout its 27-year history, the park has welcomed over 90 million visitors from all over the world spanning its PortAventura Park, Caribe Aquatic Park and Ferrari Land. The entire complex operates five, 4-star themed hotels and one, 5-star hotel, with more than 2,300 rooms, and, in addition, it is home to the PortAventura Convention Centre, with capacity for up to 6,000 people. You can read the full story on page 42.

For our Open to Question interview this issue, I sat down with the newly appointed – and first female – Drayton Manor Managing Director, Victoria Lynn to find out how she's bringing her 20+ years of experience working in the Middle East amusement sector to the UK park. Turn to page 50 for more.

Beth Whitaker **Editor**



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## A landmark addition at Flamingo Land takes flight with Sik

Opening on 2 July, the multi-inversion roller coaster Sik has sent reverberations through the coaster fraternity with this eagerly-anticipated attraction from Liechtenstein based manufacturer, Intamin. At a cost of £18m, Flamingo Land has significantly backed its new ride and has high hopes for its success. The ride build started in 2019 from its initial ride concepts.

And Sik goes around at a lofty pace, featuring a variety of thrill-seeking moments. Its stomach-busting 10 inversions include a vertical loop, two cobra rolls, two corkscrews and five heartline rolls.

Sik looks menacing with its silver track and black pillars piercing into the sky. Apart from the inversions, a highlight of the ride is the coaster passing through the underground sections where smoke billows out to great effect. The end of the attraction provides that added boost with the twists of fate to its riders that is the heartline roll before banking left alongside a fully renewable lake. The feature is part of the attraction's sustainability as carbon net neutral with solar panels used to help power the ride and water source heat pumps in the newly-created lake. The riders then return into the station entrance after a mind-bending 65-second journey. The ride has novel origins based in South America with the track coming from Brazilian theme park Hopi Hari in 2011.

The ride has a cable lift hill to take rides faster to the start of gravity. Its main height reaches 33-metres (108.3ft) and shoots around the track at up to 85.1km/h (52.9mph). Sik weaves around the Intamin Tri Track with an overall length of 875-metres (2,870.8ft); 24 riders are allocated to a single train with an hourly capacity of 1,250 passengers with a smooth lap bar being the rider's restraint.

Flamingo Land's collaboration with fashion brand SikSilk, which comes from nearby Scarborough, gave the ride its name of Sik through its mutual owners being friends, and decided to forge a partnership with their local theme park. The result is a sleek and sheikh attraction in Sik.



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# EUROPE

## IN FOCUS: Christer Fogelmarck discusses Gröna Lund expansion

Gröna Lund amusement park in Stockholm, Sweden is gearing up for a long-awaited expansion thanks to a significant court hearing, with construction starting in earnest on the land which parking bays currently occupy. To improve accessibility, the new area of Gröna Lund will include a public promenade above the water with benches along the pier for guests to take in the scenic views. A new bridge will connect the expanded area with the rest of the park.

**Christer Fogelmarck, CEO of Parks and Resorts Scandinavia explains how significant the expansion is.**

**InterPark: What was the initial reaction to the plans?**

**Christer Fogelmarck:** "Huge relief and an explosion of emotions. The Land and Environmental Court of Appeal approved plans for Gröna Lund to expand the amusement park for 2024 and we are naturally pleased."

**IP: Which attractions will be located on the site?**

**CF:** "This is still to be decided, but flat rides, dark rides and at least one coaster will fit the area. The ambition is to have 'a world's first' on the site. We want to create a funfair area for guests of all ages. Games, restaurants, ice cream parlours, trees and greenery should be combined with attractions that are both nerve-wracking and child friendly. A wonderful mix to create an authentic funfair setting."

"Planning the new area in detail needs to be done with regard to the location and what the detailed plan allows when it is established. Before we know what framework we must relate to, including how high the attractions may be and what area they may occupy, we cannot decide which attractions we can place there. When the detailed plan has gained legal force, we can start planning the area in detail."

"We have produced various illustrations to show approximately what it could look like with different types of attractions in the maximum heights in the area. These are not sharp plans, but just illustrations of what it might look like."

**IP: What is the importance of the green zone to Gröna Lund and the wider area?**

**CF:** "As Stockholm is growing, the number of guests visiting Gröna Lund has been increasing for more than a decade. Turning the parking lot into a beautiful park with attractions is a dream come true supported by the public, municipality, the region, and the royal institutions."

**IP: What will the impact be of a new shoreline?**

**CF:** "Making the shoreline available to anybody all-year-round has been an important part of the project. It also enhances the unique setting for Gröna Lund as a city seaside park."

## Museum of Illusions debuts in Brussels

Highly acclaimed museum operators Museum of Illusions has opened its 37th attraction this summer. The new museum can be found in Brussels and follows on the heels of its Philadelphia venue, which was unveiled in March 2022. This original concept was launched in Zagreb, Croatia in 2015.

The Brussels venue promises a highly immersive visitor experience to play with the senses of its intrigued guests. Visitors to the Brussels attraction will find interactive illusion rooms, brain-teasing exhibits, optical illusions, and holograms. The Museum of Illusions in Belgium is an exhibition which will house many world first features and is in the district of Grand Place, known for its arts and culture.

The museum operators are ambitious and have targeted, by 2026, to open 100 locations around the world. Plans are already afoot for further developments with a new museum in Rome in development. And The Mall of America will in the future be home to the largest museum of its kind.

The Museum of Illusions organisation describe themselves as 'an interactive, immersive and fun experience for children, parents, couples,



**IP: How does the park intend to solve the lack of parking space in the area?**

**CF:** "Getting rid of the parking lot makes almost no difference as there is already a huge lack of parking spaces in the area. In fact, Gröna Lund and the surrounding tourism attractions are lobbying to make the whole area a car free zone. Cars would then park in designated areas in the town and guests would come to Djurgården by foot, by bike or public transportation. That is how the majority of our guests come to us already."

**IP: What are the target visitor numbers to the expanded Gröna Lund?**

**CF:** "There is no target set yet. That would be to start at the wrong end of things. Our focus is to create the most beautiful and exciting park the world has ever seen."



grandmothers and grandfathers - a perfect, unusual and exciting place for all generations.' Their attractions will provide 'amusing and awesome tricks to teach you about vision, perception, the human brain and science so it will be easier to perceive why your eyes see things which your brain cannot understand.'



## World's first tornado thrill action arrives at Futuroscope



Tornado Chasers will give guests a whirl with the world's first installation of the dynamic motion theatre courtesy of Dynamic Attractions. The action-based thrill ride is now open at French theme park Futuroscope and is a state-of-the-art visitor experience.

Guests will sit on a revolutionary spinning theatre platform in front of a 5,000sqft circular screen. It is a 120-seat theatre situated on a circular platform, which is attached to a massive motion base capable of perpetual spin (yaw), 10° of total tilt and roll, 0.7-metres (2.4ft) of heave, and the ability to do coin-roll manoeuvres. The ride is capable of spinning at up to 30km/h (18mph), stopping, and smoothly reversing direction. It can track the events taking place on stage or in the media with precision, allowing for the thrills of moving and spinning while virtually eliminating unwanted motion sickness from the guest experience. The experience provides a seamless blend of a live action stage show with a media-based dark ride - giving attraction designers a broad toolset for delivering next-level guest experiences.

The motion theatre is situated in the midst of one or more stages which allow for live show content. Concealing these stages are a series of large 360° cylindrical media screens which provide a fully immersive ambience. The ride can rotate to follow the events on the media screens, and the screens themselves can rotate or lift at predetermined times to reveal the live stage show behind them and give special 'reveal' moments.

The experience comes with enhanced live action, LED projections, and special in-theatre effects. Guests will be in the eye of the storm as they

are literally plunged into the middle of a simulated tornado chase. Riders take the role of a storm chaser gunning down the F5 along tornado alley. Guests will be totally immersed in the production with one scene being inside the tornado itself, moving around circularly with smoke drifting down. Its special FX capabilities including wind, mist, scent, strobe lighting, pyrotechnics and sound to heighten senses.

The prototype was first announced at the IAAPA Expo in Orlando in 2016. Six years later, it has made its theme park bow. It was an award-winning prototype attraction at the Expo and it is clear to see why.

Futuroscope has unleashed its new natural disaster attraction and according to the futuristic park: "You'll be whisked away by a mind-blowing storm. The show will sweep you along in a whirlwind experience surrounded by the action on a LED circular screen with special effects and 'live' scenes, all on a rising, falling, tilting and turning platform. This experience is unique in the world."

Dynamic Attractions describe the motion theatre as, "the world's most advanced theatre attraction" and "was designed from the ground up to allow attraction designers to blend the charm of a live stage show with the thrills of an action-packed dark ride."

The immersive motion theatre opens the doors for more engaging shows, creating richer guest experiences, and offering larger draws for the park. Dynamic Attractions has created a ride that will conjure emotions of anticipation, excitement, fun and fear - an attraction for all the senses in Tornado Chasers at Futuroscope.





## Summer spectacle at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi

Technology continues to play an increasing role in our daily lives. And the theme park world is no different with attractions across the world relentlessly breaking down the boundaries of evolution and development. In terms of eye-catching entertainment, an ever increasingly popular spectacle that visitor attractions are adopting are drone shows, such is their eye-catching impact and impressive visuals. Add to this its unique footage from all angles, which ensures visitor attractions can project a new way of creating a display to catch the attention far and wide.

Ferrari World is the latest visitor attraction to harness the power of the drone. The Ferrari World Drone show has been making a huge impact at the Yas Island each summer weekend. The show starts at 19:30pm and guests have been dazzled by the colourful patterns and images over the showpiece Ferrari red roof at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi. Having the lights beam off the roof gives this particular drone experience a unique feel. An indoor drone setting continues the theme of the Middle East pushing the envelope of cutting-edge technology to deliver its guests.

Ferrari World Abu Dhabi has gone big to create a thrilling light show to heighten guests' senses. The park describes it as 'a one-of-a-kind show that is everything you are looking for! Don't miss out on 150 drones lighting up the sky of Bell' Italia under the iconic red roof in the evening'. It is a highly dynamic show that illuminates to great effect thanks to its turbo charged drones.

It is another impressive attraction to add to the five Ferrari-themed



roller coasters at the park, including the world fastest roller coaster of Formula Rossa. A beacon of inspiration, Ferrari World has been on the starting grid since 4 November 2010 and houses other novel Formula One style attractions such as a tyre changing challenge, an interactive motion simulator of a race, a 400-metre (1312ft) zip-line that travels through the Flying Aces roller coaster and a roof walk consisting of a 90-minute tour at the top of the roof of Ferrari World - towering up at a stomach churning 600-metres (1968ft).

The Ferrari World Drone show takes the chequered flag with a winning performance. A show in a race of its own.

## SeaWorld Abu Dhabi to utilise a solar energy system

An on-site solar energy system at the SeaWorld Abu Dhabi theme park is to be built. The new energy system is at present under construction on Yas Island.

Emerge is to be a partnership between UAE's Masdar and France's EDF, and will be tasked with the build. Its power source will reach 8.2 megawatts (MW) through a rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) system. Emerge will provide a turnkey solution and oversee all major construction phases from design to operational maintenance.

"The deployment of new solar energy systems is consistent with our progress towards further leveraging the capacity of sustainable sources across our developments," said Mohamed Al Zaabi, CEO of Miral and the developer of the theme park. "This partnership, a significant environmental milestone, underscores our commitment to sustainability as we strengthen Yas Island's position as a global destination within the Emirates' tourism ecosystem."

Meanwhile, Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi, CEO of Masdar, added: "By leveraging the local and international experience of Masdar and EDF - both leading companies in the energy sector - the Emerge joint venture is ideally equipped to support Miral's ongoing environmental efforts, and in turn help to drive sustainable development within the regional leisure and tourism sector."

And Marc Swanson, Chief Executive Officer of SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., commented: "As an organization we are committed to creating a more sustainable future and encourage all initiatives that help advance that cause. This agreement reflects SeaWorld Abu Dhabi's alignment with our efforts to adopt efficient and innovative solutions

across our parks. Working with our partners on the first SeaWorld marine-life theme park outside of the United States, we are excited to share and exchange our experience with the region and come together for a better environment."



Image: SeaWorld Abu Dhabi





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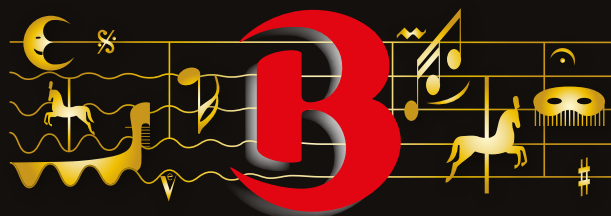
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# MIDDLE EAST



## Nakheel Mall launches VR-powered Escape Room

Nakheel Mall in Dubai, UAE, is set to offer visitors an unparalleled entertainment experience, complementing its portfolio of retail, dining and leisure attractions with the launch of Game Over Escape Rooms and Board Game Café.

Spanning across 11,000sqft, the unique entertainment zone features 12 escape rooms, 11 meta-escape rooms where VR headsets make the escape experience more immersive and a board game café with more than 50+ titles for board-game fans to explore.

Through curating entertainment experiences aimed at bringing people

together - families, friends and colleagues, for special occasions, team building or just a fun day out - the Game Over Escape Rooms and Board Game Café offers visitors the chance to enjoy a range of rich experiences at Palm Jumeirah's leading luxury shopping destination.

Designed by professional animators and creators of dramatic alternative universes for film, the experiences are aimed at families, adventure seekers and horror fiends and combine cutting edge technology, riddles and puzzles, while staying true to the original themes and storylines.







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## Harry Potter: A Forbidden Forest Experience premieres this autumn

The Harry Potter: A Forbidden Forest Experience will make its debut in Leesburg, Washington D.C. on 29 October.

The experience will be open Mondays to Sundays from 5-11pm and last between 60 and 90 minutes.

The attraction is created by Warner Bros. Themed Entertainment, which has worked in unison with entertainment discovery platform Fever, award-winning theatrical designers and experiential creators Thinkwell, and Unify, in bringing to life Harry Potter: A Forbidden Forest Experience.

Guests will be able to live the wizarding world of Harry Potter through a

night-time outdoor experience. With an exciting and enchanting thrill, Harry Potter fans will follow a magical light trail where they will discover illuminated moments from the Forbidden Forest and be reunited with the mythical creatures from the Fantastic Beasts series.

## Lego Discovery Center to open in three new locations



Merlin Entertainments has revealed plans to open three Lego Discovery Centers in the US next year.

The Lego Discovery Centers will feature a mix of new and reimagined interactive experiences for all the family.

The three new sites will be Washington, Boston, where refurbishment will take place, and Atlanta.

The reimagined Lego Discovery Centres include 'Out of This World' - a new Lego 'Space Mission' digital experience where children and families can build their own space rocket out of Lego bricks.

'The One to Choo-Choo-se' is an interactive train journey boarding the 'Imagination Express'. Along the journey, guests will 'visit' a giant bubble bath, travel down the plug hole, enter the Lego Ocean and ride into outer space.

Finally, the 'Something for VIT's (Very Important Toddlers)' will be for pre-schoolers featuring an indoor play for under fives, filled with a dinosaur-themed carousel and slides.

The popular Playmakers and Master Model Builders areas will be part of the new centres.

## Wild Mouse races into Cedar Point

Cedar Point is to launch a new Wild Mouse roller coaster. Described as a new thrill ride with nostalgic charm, "with a nod to the original Wild Mouse coaster, the modern Wild Mouse has it all: hills, twists, dives, and hairpin turns as you play an unpredictable game of 'cat and mouse' in your quest to capture the cheese!"

Wild Mouse is to feature six mouse-themed cars and one cheese-themed car with the riders choosing between the mouse or cheese.

Each four-passenger car will climb 52ft before embarking on a twisting journey along 1,312ft orange track. The Wild Mouse roller coaster will be a unique ride each time due to the free form spinning action depending on the number of riders aboard each car.

Cedar Point's 18th roller coaster experience arrives to the park in 2023 and will be part of the new seaside themed area named The Boardwalk.







## Dollywood confirms Big Bear Mountain coaster ready for Spring 2023

President and celebrated Country and Western singer Dolly Parton has announced the \$25m (£20.6m) Big Bear Mountain.

The roller coaster will span 3,990ft and will treat guests "to embark on an unforgettable expedition through the Smokies in search of the elusive Big Bear."

It will have a maximum speed of 48mph and have three separate launches, multiple airtime hills, high-speed carousel turns, and tunnels, including a pass behind a waterfall.

Big Bear Mountain will commence the expansion of Dollywood's newest area, Wildwood Grove.

The ride is to be built by manufacturer Vekoma and will feature on-board audio. The sound system 'provides auditory thrills to match the ride's dynamic movements as guests come daringly close to Big Bear,' according to a park spokesperson.

"The Smokies are all about adventure and going exploring," Dolly Parton said. "I'm excited our guests will be able to head out on their own trip into the Smokies to see if they can find that Big Bear!"

"Big Bear Mountain is an exciting ride that really is going to be a game changer for us," said Eugene Naughton, President of the Dollywood Company. "Not only is it the largest coaster we've built, but it includes features like on-board audio that are new for our company. Big Bear Mountain also expands the footprint of Wildwood Grove and serves as another monumental step in the ongoing investment plan Dolly and I announced in June 2021. She's keeping me busy. Now that we've announced Big Bear Mountain, I'll start working on the next projects she has lined up for me!"

## Connect&Go appoints Ted Molter

Connect&Go, a leader in integrated attractions management solutions and RFID technology, has announced the addition of Ted Molter, former Chief Marketing Officer at San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance.

Molter brings more than 30 years of experience in zoos, aquariums and the attractions industry to his new role as Senior Business Development Director at Connect&GO.

Molter's career has spanned leadership roles at both San Diego Zoo and SeaWorld Ohio. He is a current IAAPA Board Member and has provided leadership and service as an active member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the San Diego Tourism Authority, Visit California and the California Travel Association.

"We are thrilled to welcome Ted to the Connect&GO team as we continue our expansion into the United States and beyond," said Tara Morandi. "Ted brings an incredible amount of passion and expertise in helping zoos and aquariums grow their revenue, and he will be a huge asset to our team."

His accomplishments include leading the marketing team through a successful re-structuring garnering over \$80m (£66m) in annual sales revenue and significant cost savings and leading an organisation-wide re-brand resulting in increased awareness and donations.

"Connect&GO has an outstanding company culture and a truly revolutionary product that can change the future of zoos and attractions



management," said Molter. "Their Konnect all-in-one management platform presents a unique opportunity for zoos to step into the future of attractions management, and I'm excited to help them embrace the full potential of their operations."

Connect&GO caters for water parks, zoos, aquariums and attractions worldwide with integrated technology solutions enabling them 'to grow their business through connected systems and seamless integrations.'



# AMERICAS



## The Lost Island - a brave new world

It is always an exciting time when a new ride opens or a new product is released. But it becomes extra special when a theme park opens its doors. And that is the case for The Lost Island theme park, in Waterloo, Iowa. The park opened on 18 June at a cost of \$100m (£84.5m). It includes five themed lands with a variety of attractions, including three roller coasters: Nopuko is a suspended looping coaster, which arrived from Ratanga Junction in South Africa as Cobra. Matugani is an Intamin accelerator coaster and an SBF/Visa junior Wacky Worm coaster named Lokolo.

The Lost Island theme park is owned by the Bertch family, who operate The Lost Island water park. The five themed lands of The Lost Island are Mura Fire Clan, home to Volkanu: Quest for the Golden Idol, a media based interactive attraction created by Sally Dark Ride. There is Yuta Earth Tribe, which features Matugan and Awa Water Nomads, Tamariki Spirit Realm and Udara Air Kingdom, which has the Nopuko Air Coaster.

**Eric Bertch, one of the owners and General Managers of The Lost Island, gave his thoughts about The Lost Island.**

**InterPark: What does The Lost Island consist of?**

**Eric Bertch:** "Five unique realms offering a variety of heavily themed rides, play areas, music, and signature food items centred around an original IP concept."

**IP: How long did the construction take?**

**EB:** "Officially 33 months and 25 days. Technically we will always be under construction improving the park."

**IP: What were the challenges of building the new theme park?**

**EB:** "The obvious ones were dealing with COVID-related material increases followed by supply chain bottlenecks that prevented parts and merchandise from arriving in time. Weather was also challenging - we had two weeks of rain after breaking ground followed immediately by a cold snap that delayed earthwork for five months, sustained 25-40mph winds every Spring sometimes 10 days in a row, and erecting coasters/pouring concrete in -25F temperatures both winters. The other big challenge was creating the background for the world and tying all the different thematic elements together so the colours and the 'feel' of each different piece matched."



**IP: What is the concept of The Lost Island and what's behind the name?**

**EB:** "We decided to name our water park 'Lost Island' 22 years ago, because a tropical paradise seems quite out of place in the middle of a cornfield in Iowa. That was exactly why we felt Waterloo needed one - so our neighbours could experience an exotic location without ever boarding a flight. The theme park is an extension of that original concept - beyond just an ambiguous beach somewhere. Guests can learn about characters and look through our companion app (Lost Island Adventure Guide on Google Play/App Store) that will hopefully encourage them to dig deeper into the world we created and visit again for more than the amazing rides and menu items."

**IP: Could you describe some of the rides that guests can experience?**

**EB:** "Completely refurbished Vekoma SLC (Nopuko), Intamin hydraulic launch coaster (Matugani), and S&S Shot & Drop (Skyborne), new Gerstlauer Sky Fly (Amara Aviators), Zamperla Disk'O Coaster (Shaman's Curse), original concept Sally Dark Ride (Volkanu: Quest for the Golden Idol)."

**IP: What are the expected visitor numbers for The Lost Island?**

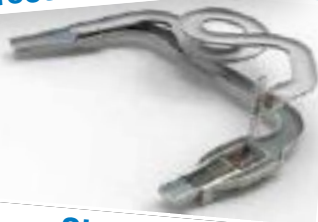
**EB:** "Two months ago we were projecting 250,000. Since opening 18 June, our new projected attendance for 2022 is 25,000. We look forward to continuing to grow that number each year as the theme park becomes more established."



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## Kiztopia opens in Singapore

An indoor kids' edutainment theme park will be coming to Singapore in September.

With entertaining and educating children at the heart of the attraction, Kiztopia will open its first overseas entertainment complex in New Town Plaza in Sha Tin.

The award-winning attraction will feature eight original cartoon characters at the park's career experience zone with six job types.

The 12,000sqft complex will feature 15 play experience areas, including eight giant slides as high as four-metres as well as challenging obstacle games, such as rock climbing and trampolines.

## Largest vertical loop roller coaster opens in Japan

The largest vertical loop roller coaster in Japan opened on 16 July at Himeji Central Park in Hyogo prefecture.

The Venus GP reaches a height of 36-metres (118ft) and a length of 1,040-metres (3,441ft). Due to the vertical loop's 60° drop angle, the cars can reach a maximum speed of 86km/h (53.4mph) resulting in a high G-Force of 5.2G.

The Venus GP has been re-imagined - It was designed originally by the late German engineer Anton Schwarzkopf. It debuted in 1996 at Space World, a now-closed theme park in Fukuoka prefecture. The steel structure has been preserved since Space World's closure in January 2018 and now has been given a second life at Himeji Central Park.

During its opening ceremony, the first 24 passengers on the Venus GP's first flight were part of history. However, a ticket to its premier did not come cheap at ¥10,000 (£61). It did include admission to Himeji Central Park's amusement and safari areas as well as the summer pool.



## Lotte World Adventure Busan enjoys successful opening period

Lotte World Adventure Busan is celebrating a fine start to life as a new theme park.

The park welcomed over half a million visitors during its first 100 days of operation.

One out of every seven citizens currently living in the city of Busan have visited the park.

The park, designed by Hollywood, CA-based Legacy Entertainment, in cooperation with Lotte World is the main hub of activities at Busan's Osiria Tourism Complex, a 900-acre development to increase the city's profile as an international leisure destination.

"It goes without saying that we are thrilled for our friends and partners at Lotte World with the remarkable attendance at the new park in just 100 days," says Barry Kemper, Legacy Entertainment's Chief Operating Officer, as well as one of its owners.

"Leading up to the opening, it was unclear what impacts the pandemic and dearth of international tourism might have had on the park's

performance. Fortunately, the local population showed up en masse, and the park now has a solid foundation upon which it can grow."







## World's First Rift water slide arrives at Titanic Deluxe Golf Belek

The world's first Rift water slide courtesy of Polin Waterparks is making waves and promises to take riders on a fun aquatic journey.

The setting for the water attraction is the Titanic Deluxe Golf Belek Resort, in Turkey.

It accommodates 594 rooms covering 170,000sqm in the area of Antalya. Its backdrop next to the Beşgöz River on the Mediterranean is a haven for water enthusiasts. And now the resort is home to a new waterpark full of thrilling features.

The water park itself covers 15,000m<sup>2</sup> with nine adult slides from three towers, a 210m<sup>2</sup> swimming pool, and a kids' pool with a water play structure including seven slides and several interactive toys.

The centrepiece of the waterpark is the new slide Rift, which was officially launched at IAAPA Expo 2021 in Orlando, Florida.

Polin discusses their main attraction of Rift: "With a height of 10.8m (35.5ft), Rift welcomes riders on a thrilling back and forth journey with its majestic theming options. This visually impressive, aesthetically striking slide has gravity dueling drop and an 'intricately engineered' outrun. Its riding experience comes with dynamic movements in two directions and almost 90° spikes.

"Rift water slide completely differentiates itself with its compact and eye-catching design."





## Latest OCT Happy Valley project announced for Changsha, China



The Happy Valley project is adding to its portfolio of attraction hubs. An agreement has been signed over this summer to confirm the next OCT (Overseas Chinese Town Enterprise) Happy Valley project. The announcement came on 21 July as Qin Guoliang, Secretary of the Wangcheng District Committee of Changsha City, China, held a meeting with Chang Sheng, Deputy General Manager of OCT Happy Valley Group, in which plans were officially unveiled for the latest OCT Happy Valley project.

The OCT Happy Valley project will be located on the south side of the tourist attraction at the Tongguan Kiln Ancient Town Complex. It is expected

to be a significant cultural and tourism project and will represent the next generation of the OCT project. The development will consist of three key phases: Happy Galaxy, Happy Valley and Happy Pastoral. The attractions of the first phase in the area of 'Happy Galaxy' will accommodate a large-scale water fortress, rainbow slides, lazy river and parent-child pools.

This will be the ninth project for the Happy Valley amusement chain since it opened its first park back in Shenzhen on 1 October, 1998. The rise of the popular Happy Valley attractions across China continues a pace.

## Lionsgate Entertainment World celebrates third anniversary

Lionsgate Entertainment World has celebrated its third anniversary with guests and cast members coming together to toast to success and celebrate the park. Lionsgate Entertainment World, from Zhuhai, China, prides itself as a one-of-a-kind immersive entertainment experience, 'taking guests into the world of films and inviting them to become the hero of their own theatrical stories.' It is the world's first Lionsgate international movie theme park and is owned by Hong Kong Lai Sun Group and operated by the Village Roadshow Theme Parks group of Australia. It is an indoor and interactive film theme park that features attractions, live entertainment, retail and F&B refreshments.

Lionsgate Executive Vice President and Head of Global Products and Experiences Jenefer Brown said: "Given the unprecedented challenges we have faced throughout the past three years, we are grateful to know that Lionsgate Entertainment World has offered visitors the kind of fun and adventure that they will always remember. We look forward to continuing to delight our fans with world class theme park entertainment for many years to come."

"Lionsgate Entertainment World is committed to bringing the captivating world of film to life to make the utmost contribution to the tourism infrastructure development of Zhuhai and China."

Meanwhile, Selena Magill, Executive General Manager, Village Roadshow Theme Parks Asia, said: "It's been a difficult but rewarding three years. The park has carefully navigated its way through the challenges brought on by the pandemic but despite this we have created new in-park shows, experiences and sales channels which we look forward to sharing with guest in the exciting years ahead."

Lionsgate Entertainment World has achieved several significant milestones throughout its existence. Its list of achievements reads winning the 2020 TEA Award of Outstanding Achievement for The Twilight Saga: Midnight Ride. The park has offered a new 'Edutainment' course, combining educational and immersive experiences. It also introduced a new La



Land Dance Party, bringing together multiple immersive entertainment experiences with romance as its central theme. And a brand-new world's first vertical parade launched, combining magic, song and dance through six unique movie IP's.





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## Jinma's Flying Coaster flies into Silk Road Paradise

The Flying Coaster is bound for take off on 28 September as Jinma Rides serves up its latest ride offering. The sky will be the only limit as riders enjoy a plane-like journey in a blue carriage and along a sleek orange track. The coaster is the flagship attraction for Silk Road Paradise, a cultural and tourism project in China. Around 80,000sqm of the build has been finished, with work on-going on 16 rides and attractions.

**Jinma International Division General Manager and Project Director International. IP-themed, Mr. Leo Jwei Lee, gave his thoughts about The Flying Coaster.**

### **InterPark: Describe the technical elements of the ride**

**Leo Jwei Lee:** "The Flying Coaster has a 2,919ft (890-metre) track, featuring roll, horizontal loop, dive flight, drive turn, etc, with a maximum speed of 58.4mph (94.5km/h). As you are launched, passengers begin in a sitting posture but are transformed to a lay-down posture and the coaster lifts off for the sky. After cresting the lift hill, it twists 180° to flip passengers into the flying posture, which provides a thrilling and unparalleled experience of soaring in the sky.

"New technics are used on the vehicle. The chassis elements are integrated from machined materials without any welds, which are lighter and much easier for future maintenance. Ergonomically designed seats will make it a more comfortable riding experience. It can achieve two forms of sitting and lying during the sliding process. It has four playing experiences: sitting position forward, sitting position backward, flying, and lying position.

"In addition, in order to realise the posture of sitting and lying, two different stress structures need to be considered. In this regard, Jinma Rides adopts the locking method of connecting rod self-locking and locking pin. These two methods are locked independently and do not affect each other. The link mechanism can ensure that passengers can choose one of the two postures, and there is no intermediate stop position to ensure effective locking. In order to ensure the reliable operation of the mechanism, Jinma Rides has made a flying roller coaster prototype in the factory and conducted more than 20,000 cycle tests.

"Because the flying roller coaster is heavier than the conventional roller coaster, it puts forward high requirements for the track bearing capacity. In this regard, Jinma has introduced a new process box girder structure. Compared with the box girder structure currently on the market, the

surface of the box girder made by Jinma has no folds; just smooth, like it was scanned from a 3D model."

### **IP: What were the challenges?**

**LJL:** "This is going to be the first Flying Coaster Jinma will bring to the industry. How can we make it unique? What can we improve on from the currently operating flying coasters in the market, for a better experience? We studied a lot and decided to make it a sitting-down position for loading/unloading, then transfer to flying position after being lifted to the top. It is not easy to make a coaster unique, but we hope riders can feel it after being opened to public.

"Secondly, Covid-19 made it a challenge for site installation and commissioning. It's almost done now thankfully."

### **IP: Tell us about the theming around the ride?**

**LJL:** "This attraction will be themed going through / around a snow mountain. Details to be unveiled by the park when it's open.

### **IP: What was the decision behind an orange track and blue carriage?**

**LJL:** "This Flying Coaster is designed together with the customer, in other words, customised to be perfectly integrated with the park themes. The colour of the track and vehicle is made to achieve that expectation.

"The colour orange usually brings cheers, while blue is often associated with science and technology. This has, so far, been proven to be a good combination of colours on such an exciting flying coaster."

### **IP: Describe the ride in three words**

**LJL:** "Distinctive, friendly, secure."

### **IP: How has the pandemic impacted Jinma's operations?**

**LJL:** "It became difficult for delivery, particularly for international projects, this may be the worst that the pandemic brought us. But things are improving now.

Remote online meeting are becoming common in business talks."

### **IP: What is the business ethos of Jinma Rides?**

**LJL:** "To be one of the prominent global rides designers, by exclusive designs, featured, quality, affordable."





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# WATER PARKS



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## Familypark makes a splash with Austria's largest water ride

Biberburg at Familypark has become the biggest water coaster in Austria. Riders first took the plunge during its opening in July. The log flume style water ride and its park have partnered with ride constructors Intamin. The water ride has many features and varying intensities of splashdowns. Riders take a forwards journey out of the station through Biberburg and its endearing theming to a sawmill filled with beavers - hence the name chosen, translating as beaver castle. A backwards section then awaits, meandering riders along smoothly towards further thrills.

**Matthias Bano, Project Lead Biberburg & Draftsman and Ira Kama, Marketing of Familypark in St. Margarethen, Austria gave InterPark the lowdown on the new splash hit.**

**InterPark:** Tell us more about Biberburg?

**Familypark:** "Austria's largest flume ride the 'Beaver Lodge' provides the ultimate riding experience in the farm area of the Familypark. The ride itself takes 4 - 5 minutes and entertains with different funny beaver scenes while floating with the boat. The grand finale is the open lift hill that takes you up to a height of 17-metres (55ft) before you whiz down into the depths at a speed of up to 65km/h (40mph) and ends in a giant splash. The passengers themselves are not the only ones to enjoy the ride, the splash is very entertaining and cooling for guests waiting in the splash area."

**IP:** Why was this type of ride chosen for the park?

**FP:** "The construction of a large water attraction had been planned for a long time, which was made possible by the new headquarters CDA Companie des Alpes, which invested £8.5m (€10m) into the new ride. Furthermore, summertime is the high season at Familypark so the attraction should add to the existing water attractions and also target not only children, but teenagers and adults as well."

**IP:** How long did the project take to build?

**FP:** "The biggest challenge is the hybrid nature of the attraction, as the gondola sometimes floats like a boat and sometimes rolls on wheels like

a roller coaster. The most complicated solution is to switch between the two types of transportation. The other big challenge is the water itself, since we must move one-million litres between three levels with the help of canals and lakes. The behaviour of the float is difficult to model, so many solutions had to be redesigned and adapted before the opening. The construction took just under 18 months having started in November 2020 and completing in February 2022. This was followed by commissioning, which was completed by the end of June."

**IP:** Why did you choose Intamin as the ride manufacturer?

**FP:** "The manufacturer was selected by the owner company (CDA). Intamin was able to convince with its cost plans and site-specific visual plans and of course a lot of experience in this sector."







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# WATER PARKS



**IP:** Can you tell us more about novel lift hill?

**FP:** "This is the first time that Intamin has made such a high lift for a water roller coaster. The operation of the elevator is also the first of its kind, incredibly strong elevator belts and a counterweight keep the system in balance, which is driven by four electric motors. The sheer height of the tower already raises the adrenaline, and then the boat literally plunges into the depths. The boat first splashes into the water at the beaver castle, then covers the onlookers before running into the station."



**IP:** How many visitors does the park attract?

**FP:** "Due to Covid-19, the last two years we of course had a decline in visitor numbers. Referring to 2019, before the pandemic hit, the park had around 700,000 visitors a year. The feedback from our customers about the new ride has been great so far. They love the height of the attraction and the giant splash. And also, a lot of visitors love to wait in the splash area for a refreshment on a hot summers day. We also had a grand opening of the Biberburg with music, mascots and VIPs. Also, a female priest blessed the new attraction."

## Ontario Place in Toronto gets go-ahead

A revamped waterfront park in Toronto, Canada is in the pipeline in the shape of Ontario Place.

In August, a presentation was held explaining more details about the developments.

Austria's Therme Group is to redesign the former park and is tasked with regenerating the 155 acres of waterfront property. Plans will include

a new water park that has a retractable roof and a sandy beach boardwalk. ÉcoRécréo, which is based in Quebec, will work in partnership with Therme Group.

During the presentation, an outdoor adventure zone was also revealed, which will include zip lines and climbing walls along with boats and bike rentals. There will be ice skating trails and tree-lined walking paths - The idea being the park and green space will be more accessible during Toronto's wintery months.

There are also plans to enlarge the water's edge show boardwalks to attract sun seekers and create more green areas with stone steps to provide a beautiful backdrop to the edge of Lake Ontario. Ontario Place will have seven areas in total, which are to be both redesigned and constructed. These areas will be the recreation, wellness and water park attraction area, restored pods and Cinesphere, marina, an all-year-round entertainment complex, outdoor adventure zone, Trillium Park and programming and event zone.

At the presentation of Ontario Place, it was revealed the new park will create 3,000 jobs and the park is targeting five million visitors annually. Construction is scheduled to start in late 2023 with the project awaiting the green light from its current stage of its design process. The spa and water park are planned to be opened by 2024 or 2025 and the overall park is slated to be fully operational by 2030.





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## SeaWorld and DHL return rehabilitated manatee to Florida

SeaWorld and DHL Express have joined forces to transport a manatee from Texas to Florida via air, after successfully being rehabilitated for eight months at SeaWorld San Antonio. The manatee was rescued in December 2021 by the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network, SeaWorld San Antonio, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas State Aquarium, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Galveston Bay Foundation and Texas authorities and transported to SeaWorld San Antonio for rehabilitation.

Members of the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP) – SeaWorld Orlando, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Clearwater Marine Aquarium Research Institute (CMARI) and Dauphin Island Sea Lab – worked together to return the manatee to Kings Bay in Crystal River. As the manatee population continues to decline as a result of an ongoing Unusual Mortality Event (UME) on the Atlantic Coast, the collaboration of dedicated partners across the nation is necessary to protect and preserve this critical species. In this case, SeaWorld San Antonio stepped up to provide care for this manatee

throughout his rehabilitation, thus preserving an extra rehabilitation space for a manatee in Florida.

Steve Aibel, Vice President of Zoological Operations at SeaWorld San Antonio said they're always ready to help manatees in need when necessary. As manatees continue to face threats amidst an unusual mortality event, it's important that animal care experts across the nation step in to help ensure the preservation of the precious species.

Earlier this year, the manatee was found suffering from cold stress, flipper damage, severe weight loss and other ailments in Texas waters. While manatees are typically known to reside in Florida, seasonal migrations to other southern states have increased in recent years. This is only the third manatee SeaWorld San Antonio has rehabilitated due to the uncommon presence of manatees in Texas.

Due to the size and delicate nature of manatee air transports, it can be difficult to find adequate transportation. Turtles Fly Too, an organisation that coordinates air transports for animals in need, worked around the clock







to try to secure an aircraft and pilot to transport this manatee to Florida. In the end, SeaWorld turned to long-time partner DHL Express to facilitate the manatee transport.

To make this move possible, DHL Express transported the manatee in a custom, state-of-the-art container built specifically to hold manatees and according to the requirements of the International Animal Transport Association (IATA) – the regulatory group overseeing all animal transport over land, air, or sea. Working with the IATA, SeaWorld helped establish the first transport unit standards for the safe transport of cetaceans and manatees, which includes the use of open-top units designed to allow the animals to move around and adjust for comfort as needed while remaining safe within their container.

The container housing the manatee is designed with high-density, lightweight, and insulated foam and secured on a pallet attached to the floor for stability. The manatee rested on an eight-inch bed of open cell foam under a layer of two-inch closed cell foam that offsets the weight of the animal and provides maximum comfort. The manatee was then covered in wool and space blankets to maintain a healthy body temperature and was constantly monitored during flight by SeaWorld animal care specialists using laser thermometers. To keep the body moist, the manatee was misted with water under its blankets throughout the flight.

"This is our fifth manatee successfully transferred through our global Hub in Cincinnati this year, and DHL is thrilled to continue supporting the effort to preserve and protect the manatee population," said Cain Moodie, SVP of Network Operations and Aviation for DHL Express Americas. "Moving manatees is an intricate process, so the speed and reliability of our air network, coupled with the extensive logistics planning with SeaWorld and their partners, helps ensure these wonderful creatures get back safely to their natural habitat."

Following a successful transport from Texas to Florida, the manatee arrived at SeaWorld Orlando for a 48-hour observation period to ensure its health had not been impacted by the travel. Once the manatee was cleared by SeaWorld veterinarians, the manatee was transported to Kings Bay in Crystal River where it was returned to the warm waters. The manatee was



tagged for a Dauphin Island Sea Lab project investigating manatee habitat use and distribution in the Northern Gulf of Mexico.

"As manatees continue to suffer from a dangerous unusual mortality event, it's more important now than ever to dedicate our time, energy and resources to ensuring their continued survival," said Jon Peterson, VP of Zoological Operations at SeaWorld Orlando and Head of SeaWorld Orlando Rescue Team. "We're grateful for the continued partnership and dedication from organisations like DHL and others who help make rescues, rehabilitations and returns not only possible, but safe and successful as well."





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# Jumanji: The Adventure | Gardaland, Italy

By David Whitworth

Jumanji, the popular film based on an adventurous board game, has arrived to the theme park industry with an immersive ride and tailor-made Jumanji rooms in a world's first.

Gardaland Resort, which also includes Gardaland Adventure Hotel and Gardaland Magic Hotel, boasts 264 entirely themed rooms (out of 475 in total), offering a holistic experience ranging from fantasy and magic to adventure, which is targeted at all the family.

"In the last few years there has been an increasing trend for visitors to favour destinations that are able to create an experience: entertaining, surprising and transporting people to other worlds," commented Aldo Maria Vigevani, Gardaland's Managing Director. "The themed rooms of our three hotels respond perfectly to this need, allowing families to continue the adventure that began in the park even during the night, and to live a unique and all-embracing experience. The Jumanji themed rooms, for example, will immerse guests in the wild jungle and allow them to experience the adventures of the protagonists of the franchise first hand."

As for the jewel attraction, Jumanji: The Adventure opened on 9 April to much fanfare with a multi-coloured fireworks display. The new ride is the fruit of a partnership between Polin Group and Merlin's Gardaland Resort. The Polin Group of Futura Form developed and produced a wide range of

special thematic and animatronic products for this world's first attraction and Gardaland's exciting 2022 dark ride attraction has been an important investment – built at a cost of £16m.

Cuneyt Sayin, General Manager of Futura Form comments: "Jumanji: The Adventure dark ride project of Merlin Entertainments' Gardaland Park, which was shown as one of the most important projects of the year by the entertainment industry professionals in 2022, was carried out by Futura Form in a period of six months, together with all of its theme, which contains many different elements, from artificial rocks and plants, to animated elements we call animatronics.

"As Futura Form, we worked with over 100 colleagues from five different countries thanks to our global structure and we are proud to have completed the project successfully."

Guests can experience an authentic adventure of the Jumanji jungle and are transported from the hotel to the game through the film's familiar green light. The ride entrance is an imposing structure themed with a giant style rock face filled with tree branches and most eye-catching of all, a rhinoceros head breaking out to great effect. The setting includes a series of water features and fountains rising sporadically. Its queue line leads you inside as you await the dark ride and, once on-board, its animatronics will amaze visitors.





The journey continues into a mysterious setting – a temple adorned with hieroglyphics and housing themed branches and an eye-catching three-dimensional plant covering the ceiling. Riders aim to keep their three lives in order, much like the film. The main attraction of Jumanji is travelling onboard a 4x4 off-road vehicle to navigate through a series of physical and digitalised temples filled with dangerous wild animals, unusual plants, falling objects and giant stones, which add to the impressive visuals. The ride moves and swings around and up and down to give riders the sensation they are playing the Jumanji game. This creates an emotional nostalgia factor with many tributes to the films, which date back to 1995 starring Robin Williams. Of course, what film features would not be genuine without the star-studded characters portrayed of the Jumanji films with the attraction including Italy's version of the film cast on site taking the roles of Dr Xander 'Smolder' Bravestone, Professor Sheldon 'Shelly' Oberon, Franklin 'Mouse' Finbar and Ruby Roundhouse. The experience is the first themed Jumanji attraction in the world, based on Sony Pictures' hugely popular film franchise. Gardaland promise guests will 'Enter the wild world of Jumanji on a danger filled journey where only you can lift the curse! Return the sacred jewel back to the fabled shrine in a race against time to save Jumanji!'

The 276-metre long dark ride has a capacity of 1,100 people/hour and offers an experience lasting three minutes and 40 seconds. It is a totally submerged experience for the senses for those brave enough to play the game of Jumanji.

**Enrico Baldazzi, Head of Marketing at Gardaland, discussed with *InterPark* in further detail the journey into Jumanji: The Adventure.**

***InterPark:* How did the first Jumanji ride for the industry end up at Gardaland?**

Enrico Baldazzi: "Sony Pictures Entertainment and Merlin Entertainments, the Group to which Gardaland belongs, have recently signed an international agreement for the building in Europe and North America of attractions, hotel rooms and stores inspired by the Jumanji film franchise. Thus, in Italy, Gardaland opened the first ride as part of this agreement, a themed attraction that is the first of its type in the world.

"The park is therefore continuing with the winning strategy of licensing deals with key global brands, focusing on international cinema successes and the chance to offer its visitors unique experiences. The global importance of the Jumanji brand will contribute to strengthening even further the reputation of Gardaland Resort as one of the leading tourism destinations in Europe, placing it among the market leaders in the entertainment industry."

**IP: What challenges were faced?**

**EB:** "The biggest challenge was to make the guests feel completely immersed in the reality of Jumanji, as happens to the protagonists of the films: therefore we have adopted some engaging solutions such as multmotion vehicles and giant screens."









**IP: Can you tell us more about the ride's Special FX?**

**EB:** "Visitors can enjoy the Jumanji world on board special wagons resembling off-road vehicles, which reproduce the famous 4-wheel drive from the film down to the last detail. Each multi-motion vehicle not only moves in a linear direction on the track but also reacts to dangers, obstacles and audio and video effects along the way, twisting and swinging around to simulate the movement of a real off-road vehicle. Thanks to these rotations and twists, the experience is even more immersive and exciting.

"The vehicles, Evo-6 models, are built by Oceaneering and are the most elaborate themed vehicles ever made by the company; there are 12 in total, each with room for six people, and they allow the transport of almost 1,000 people per hour among dangerous animals and obstacles of all types.

"To make the adventure impactful and engaging, seven screens are located inside the attraction, including two giant screens (15-metres wide by 5-metres high) and two pepper's ghost screens, created with a special tempera to enhance the images and produce a hologram effect. The screens (all suitable as giant screens) offer visitors the emotion and amazement of the Jumanji jungle, seen from up close."

**IP: Getting the authenticity of the film franchise for the ride and hotel perfect, was surely key?**

**EB:** "We worked together with Sony Pictures Entertainment to study the various characteristic elements of the films to bring them back to the attraction and hotels: from the bazaar-like setting of the entrance area of the attraction to the giant hippo that surprises visitors at the beginning of the route, both clear references to the films.

"At the same time, we have developed unique and characteristic elements of the new attraction, such as the Stone Giant, the most amazing of the various animatronics along the ride, that tries to stop visitors, representing their worst enemy. Firstly, surrounded by stormy thunder, the giant's enormous grinning head complete with fiery eyes emerges from a cave lit up by lightning, while further along the route his immense hand tries to stop the adventurers in their journey."

**IP: What features can guests expect at the Jumanji themed hotel?**

**EB:** "Gardaland Hotel, the quintessence of fantasy, offers four rooms that are entirely Jumanji-themed, allowing guests to continue their journey into this mysterious world with a unique stay experience.

"In the new themed rooms, visitors can enjoy an extraordinary adventure in the Jumanji jungle. As soon as they enter the room, they cross a hallway with artwork that simulates a band of green light - the same that transports the protagonists of the film into the game. Guests are in fact catapulted into a mysterious location: a temple with 3D branches and plants that sweep the ceiling, growing from out of the stones; a giant jaguar head, an iconic symbol of the Jumanji jungle, which is also 3D and a symbol of the jungle to protect. This is placed on the wall between the two beds to guard the room and defend it from the mandrills, hippos and cobras depicted on the walls.

"No details are neglected: from the desk where visitors can find the necessary tools for their Jumanji adventure, such as telescope and maps, or the suitcase rack with antique wooden trunks, and the many references and homages to the protagonists of the film franchise.

**IP: What are Gardaland's main USPs?**

**EB:** "Thanks to its amusement park, which ranks among Europe's top attractions, the new Legoland water park, the themed Sea Life aquarium and the three hotels (Gardaland Hotel, Gardaland Adventure Hotel and Gardaland Magic Hotel), Gardaland is today one of the most popular touristic destinations in Europe. It can be easily reached from all over Italy and from a good portion of Europe; on one side we have Lake Garda, with its views, its natural scenery, its microclimate and the proximity with the city of Verona. On the other side the strength of a brand - Gardaland - that is evocative and familiar to visitors of all ages, attracting and favouring foreign tourism and registering an influx, constantly growing, from several European and non-European countries.

"Gardaland Park is organised in themed areas that conjure up (through careful and detailed scenic reconstruction) the world of history and geography, space, and fantasy. All rides at the park offer a special combination of adventure, dream and fantasy, and the great variety of rides and shows is able to satisfy a very wide audience: from early childhood to adolescence to senior citizens, from groups of teenagers to families. Fun is guaranteed for the little ones in all the themed areas - from Peppa Pig Land and Prezzemolo Land to Fantasy Kingdom. Pure adrenaline is guaranteed for daredevils with Oblivion, Blue Tornado and Raptor, the most feared rides! Adventure lovers can instead challenge the fury of the rapids in the heart of the jungle, escape from Atlantis and join the legendary Arctic Mammoth convoy. Gardaland is also able to constantly renovate itself, offering memorable experiences to its own visitor."





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## Diverse Immersive Spins

Michael Mascioni takes a closer look at Red Raion's highly anticipated Around the World in 80 Days attraction.



**Valeria Rizzo - Business Development Director - Red Raion**



**Sara Menegazzi - Creative Director - Red Raion**

Some intellectual properties are just intrinsically suited to theme park attractions. That's certainly the case with Around the World in 80 Days, the storied Jules Verne novel that is being adapted into an immersive film by Red Raion, titled Around the World in 80 Days - Journey of Wonders.

John Gerner, Managing Director of consulting firm Leisure Business Advisors, tells **InterPark**: "it was wise to use a popular public domain IP such as Around the World in 80 Days. When I've researched potential popular domain IPs in the past, those involved with Jules Verne were at the top of my list."

The impetus for the attraction was due to client demand, "for a movie where guests could view beautiful landscapes and incredible environments. So, our goal was to produce a title that satisfied all their needs and created an unforgettable experience for their guests," explains Valeria Rizzo, Red Raion's director of business development.

The company has made a special effort to reinterpret the famous travel adventure in new ways. As Sara Menegazzi, creative director for Red Raion, points out: "There are many differences between our version of the IP and other products based on it. We revisited the IP in a way that would convey the deep sense of exploration and discovery of the original story, balanced with the frenetic rhythm of the trip. We added a fun touch, mostly given by Passepartout, Phileas Fogg's trusted valet, who, in our version, is a very bright and quite goofy android. To tell the story in just a few minutes, we chose to visualise the landscapes that were reminiscent

of the Seven Wonders of the World, rather than spend too much time explaining the places our protagonists were visiting."

Rizzo adds that, "Phileas Fogg and Passepartout must complete their frenetic trip to find Miss Auda, a fascinating and brilliant explorer that is waiting for them in a mysterious location that they have to guess through a series of clues scattered around the world. The frantic search leads the two travellers to an immersive journey of exploration across the Seven Wonders of the World, including Rome's Coliseum, the Great Wall of China, the Indian Taj Mahal, Machu Picchu in Peru, and the Brazilian statue of Christ the Redeemer."

Strong character and story development are key in this type of attraction, as Rizzo points out: "When you produce this kind of content, you have only a few minutes to establish a deep connection with your audience. To do this, you need to create relatable characters and tell a story that leaves audiences satisfied with what they have experienced in a short amount of time."

Scheduled for a September 2022 launch at the time of print, one of the attraction's special features is its "two different versions, including one for 5D cinemas and VR simulators, and another for dome and flying theatres, each taking the viewer on a slightly different journey around the Seven Wonders of the World," says Rizzo. She explains that, "people who experience the movie in 5D and VR will travel the world using trains, cars, ships, and horses, and audiences who view the movie in a dome cinema



or flying theatre will travel through these environments in a hot air balloon. The two versions were designed specifically to complement each type of media-based attraction to deliver the best experience possible." The film is geared to "people of all ages," she notes.

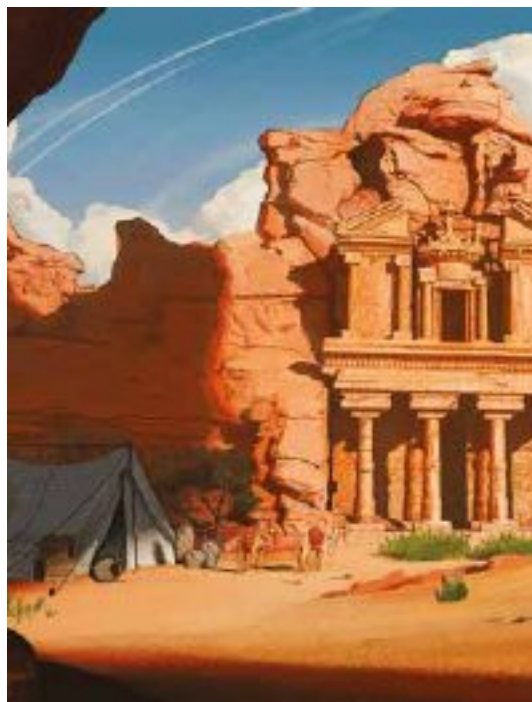
Gerner adds: "It was a wise choice to produce this experience in multiple formats if that approach didn't significantly increase production costs. The 5D format, which expands upon the proven 4D theatre format, would typically be the safest choice. Flying theatres have been increasing in recent years, so this is a good format as well."

Kevin Williams, technology director for Spider Entertainment has commented on the film, saying: "I'm very keen to see Red Raion's interpretation of the 150-year-old exciting traveling adventure. The ability of the developer to create a focused rollout for the experience demonstrates how much the market has changed. The attraction's versatility sets it apart from the new generation of immersive experiences, as it offers two different versions.

He adds that, "the use of the latest CGI in the attraction is a hallmark of Red Raion. We look forward to seeing its interpretation of such well-known characters as Phileas Fogg and Passepartout."

The immersive versatility of Red Raion's Around the World in 80 Days attraction also heralds the increasing appearance of more diverse multiformat immersive attractions geared to different audiences and venues.

Attractions with travel themes seem to have resonance due to the pandemic's impact. As Rizzo notes, "the last two years have been incredibly challenging for the whole world, and sadly, many people had to give up travel due to the pandemic. Because of this, I think there is a real desire to experience beautiful places in the world that are far from

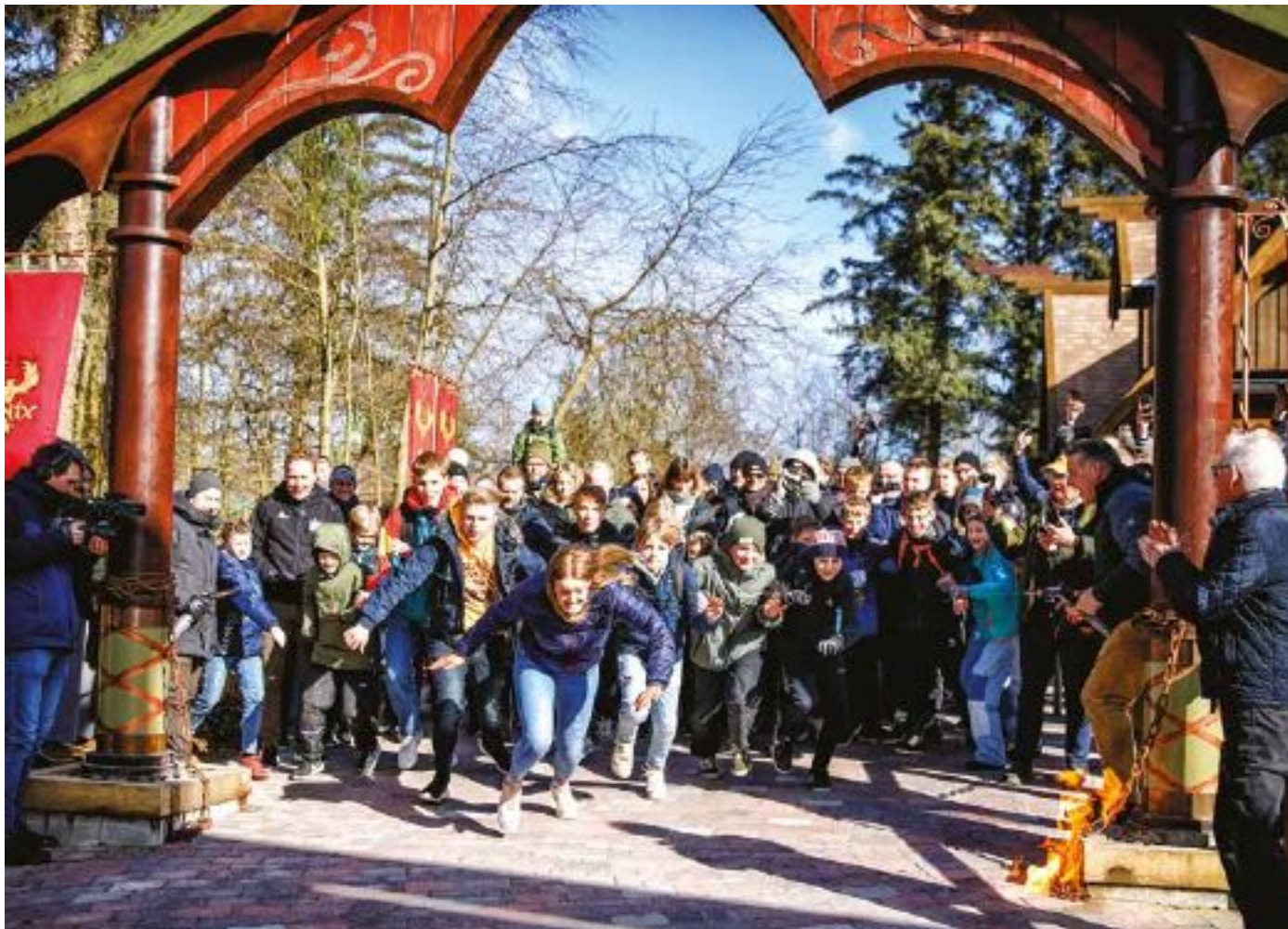


home. Our immersive attraction allows for audiences to be transported wherever they want to go without moving from their cinema seat. I believe this historical moment calls for ways to explore new places even when you can't physically visit them."

It's not surprising that audiences thirst for attractions that open up wondrous new vistas after most of the world was effectively closed down for an extended time. An attraction like Around the World in 80 Days - Journey of Wonders brings back memories of more adventurous and freewheeling times.



# PROJECT PROFILE



## Fønix | Fårup Sommerland, Denmark

By David Whitworth

Fårup Sommerland has given rise to Denmark's tallest and fastest roller coaster: Fønix (Phoenix).

The attraction opened to the public on 9 April with ride manufacturer Vekoma tasked with its creation. Fønix features three inversions: the world's first 'stall loop,' which combines the classic loop with an inversed camelback and provides an experience of zero gravity for 2.5 seconds. It also features a heart line roll and an impressive corkscrew travelling through its station.

The roller coaster exposes its riders to airtime thrills through its many drops, loops, and twists – Fønix boasts 14 airtime elements in total and is the most found on an attraction in Scandinavia; this represents 9.2 seconds of airtime and a lot of adrenaline thrown in for good measure. These shots of airtime give riders a joyous journey aboard Denmark's record-breaking star attraction – Fønix rises to thrill.

A further tale of the tape shows Fønix rising to 40-metres (131.2ft) and reaching speeds of 95km (59mph). But do not be fooled that it is a rickety

ride; Fønix is a smooth operator. It represents Denmark's longest roller coaster with a loop at 905-metres (2,969.2ft). The attraction will pull a maximum positive G-Force of 4.1 and is capable of loading 900 guests an hour. Fønix has two trains with four carriages per train. 16 passengers per train are accommodated with its restraint systems consisting of a lap bar with a vest.

Its imperious racing green structure fits neatly with the Danish countryside. At a cost of £11.3m, Fønix is the largest investment in the park's history and is a statement confirmation of a park that wants to put its stamp on the theme park attraction world. Fønix follows on from the second largest investment at the park in 2013 with Orkanen, which the park invested £5m in.

"Last year, on the day we could disclose the news about Fønix, I called this a historic day," said Fårup Sommerland's CEO, Niels Jørgen Jensen at the time of opening. "Indeed, with the official opening, I can truly say that I have even more butterflies in my stomach. Here in Fårup







# PROJECT PROFILE



Sommerland, we take great pride in presenting a roller coaster that is without comparison, the biggest in Denmark – a fact that will come to leave a significant imprint on both the Danish and the international amusement landscape.

“Owing to this historic investment, we at Fårup Sommerland are now looking into a tremendously exciting season; and we hope and trust that, by way of such a substantial addition, we will be able to attract both Danish and international guests to the benefit of Fårup Sommerland as well as the rest of the Danish tourist industry in general.

**Further reaction to the attraction comes from Rasmus Mortensen, Commercial Chief of Fårup Sommerland, who spoke exclusively to *InterPark*.**

***InterPark:* Why was the name chosen as Fønix?**

**Rasmus Mortensen:** “We have a tradition at the park to choose rides by names of animals or types of weather phenomenon such as Hurricane, Tornado, Whirlwind and The Lightning. For the name Fønix, it resonated immediately because it is the park’s rebirth after going through such extreme conditions with Covid-19. At the time of the project in 2020, the pandemic hit, and things were looking dark at that

moment. We had to decide whether we would move forward with the project. So ultimately, we felt Fønix was a way of investing and inventing our way out of the crisis.

“The name is also very short and is the same in many languages, giving guests that familiarity. The name also sits well with naming after animals or mythological animals. We also chose racing green for the track from the traditional English racing cars to complement the ride.”

**IP: Why was Vekoma chosen as the manufacturer?**

**RM:** “We have had a long-lasting relationship with Vekoma since the company manufactured our first roller coaster in 1992. The rides which Vekoma have built for us have very low maintenance and the technical department here have a productive dialogue with the Vekoma team. They help develop standards in how we can ease maintenance and enhance security measures, which the Vekoma maintenance crew perform in an extremely well-planned manner. Also, we have good chemistry between ourselves and Vekoma. They understand what we, as a park, would like to do and if we do have an issue, have an action plan to solve it. And we knew with Fønix that they could deliver it with good quality. It was an easy decision for us to partner on the project with Vekoma.”

**IP: Talk us through the revolutionary stall loop.**

**RM:** “The vision for the stall loop was to give riders that ‘wow’ factor. Originally, it was going to be five-metres (16ft) lower and not as spectacular. So, we spoke with Vekoma to discuss what we could do and eventually we came up with this. The sensation is unique. We needed a story to tell with it being Fårup’s biggest investment and to sell the feature to both fanatics of theme parks and casual riders.

“The ride itself is fast but it does not pull many G-Forces, so you do not feel nausea. It uses the G-Forces in a clever way, and most are negative G-Forces, so you are out of your seat a lot. This ride is the complete package in that it includes speed, the stall loop, the G-Forces, and riders have a view of the sea from the top of the track.”

**IP: And what about the thrill of creating a corkscrew through the station entrance?**

**RM:** “The station fly-through corkscrew is a unique ride element that reflects a disorienting near-miss on-ride sensation. It’s a one-of-a-kind interaction with the guests in the station. Vekoma first incorporated this element on Lech Coaster in Poland and was one of the elements that both parties wanted to carry over to Fønix: it is one of the coaster’s key aesthetic signatures. For Fønix, Vekoma took this near-miss effect one step up from Lech Coaster, by placing the approach to the flip-over at ground level. The train seems to fly-up to the cut-out only just in time. “For guests queueing in the station, seeing the train fly upside-down in a corkscrew and through the station building at high-speed amps heightens the anticipation, while for the guests on-board, the element provides some awesome near-miss visuals. The ride acts as the queue line entertainment for guests seeing the train whooshing through every two minutes. The feature is mostly for the on-lookers than the riders to build the suspense before riding.”

**IP: How long did the project take to build?**

**RM:** “It was 15 months from removing the first tree to all the construction buildings removed. Then the concepts, planning and negotiations was approximately another 18 months. The pandemic stretched the dates but overall, a good three-and-a-half years in total.”

**IP: What would you say are the park’s main USPs?**

**RM:** “The rides are always important but that is the hardware. Our view at Fårup is to look at both the hardware and the software with the hardware being the rides and installations and the software being the employees. Our strength is to give a unique guest experience and to educate the staff we have in hospitality; a personal touch on how we should perform guest services. The rides, combined with the guest service, is our true USP. As we say, it is not a crime to have fun, and we emphasise that to perform so much better. Other USP’s are the opening of Fønix; we also have Denmark’s biggest Aquapark; and the park’s theming – being literally in the middle of the woods.”





# PROJECT PROFILE



**IP: How many visitors is the park aiming to attract annually with the new attraction?**

**RM:** “We attract 95% of our guests from Denmark and Norway. Pre-Fønix build, our best season was in 2013 when 656,000 guests visited the park. For the last few years, pre-pandemic, our visitor numbers have been quite steady at 600,000. However, with Fønix, I am quite convinced that we are going to pass through 700,000 guests this year.”

**Stefan Holtman, Senior Director of Vekoma, spoke to InterPark about Fønix from the ride manufacturer’s standpoint.**

**InterPark: Tell us a bit more on Fårup Sommerland needing a new thrill ride?**

**Stefan Holtman:** “We were already in discussions about a new addition to the park in 2018. After the success of our suspended family coaster, Orkanen in 2013 something else was needed. After a mutual trip to Legandia Park in Poland the owners of the park fell immediately in love with the Lech coaster there.

**IP: What challenges came with the build?**

**SH:** “As Fårup Sommerland is a typical Family Park we were concerned that this ride would be a bit too intense for its target group. Therefore, we

had to work on a less intense version focusing more on airtime and less positive forces. This is how Fønix was born. As this design only existed as a concept and all engineering work still had to be done, the earliest date for opening was 2021. This would have been eight years after the launch of Orkanen and we all felt that this was too long. Then we came with the solution of launching an intermediate ride for the opening in 2020 followed by the big thrill ride in 2022. This was the birth of Saven, the first out and back family boomerang in the world, which turned into a great success for the park and was the perfect step up to the launch of the record-breaking coaster in 2022.”

**Meanwhile, Benjamin Bloemendaal, Head of Concept Engineering at Vekoma, commented from a design perspective.**

**InterPark: How did Fønix come together?**

**Benjamin Bloemendaal:** “The key design drivers for Fønix’s track design were pacing and airtime. From the exit of the stall loop all the way to the final brake run, the vehicle maintains a break-neck pace leaving no time to catch your breath. The design focusses on rapid-fire direction changes and non-stop pops of airtime. Almost every ride element provides some form of airtime: floater, ejector, side-banked



or inverted, where the latter (i.e., the three inversions) are spread strategically throughout the length of the course to create the best possible variety in the experience."

#### **IP: And what about the stall loop element?**

**BB:** "The stall loop is a world's first element that combines a traditional Immelmann inversion with an unexpected pop of inverted airtime, also known as hang time, at the top. We wanted to spice up the classic turn-around element, by turning its apex into an extended, parabolic arc. This causes the vehicle to 'pause' briefly while upside down, providing some negative forces before picking up speed again down a double vertical twist."

The beauty of Fønix is its many unique ride elements. Its first drop is a 40-metre (131ft) eye-catcher ride element with near-vertical 80° descent that pulls-out into a trench at a top speed of 95km/h (59mph). Its stall loop is a one-of-a-kind on-ride sensation with an inverted crawl at -0.5G hang time, twisted vertical drop and is a 30-metres (98ft) tall eye-catcher. And its station fly-through corkscrew gives a disorientating near-miss on-ride sensation and one-of-a-kind interaction with guests in the station that see the train flip-over their heads at a speed of 60km (37mph).



Fønix finishes with a flourish too, with a rodeo finale where the low-profile track enhances the sensation of speed, fast paced direction changes and an out-of-control seven-fold airtime thrill.

Fårup Sommerland is a family-orientated park, which on 21 June celebrated its 47th anniversary; and with Fønix, it is a roller coaster experience that everyone in Denmark can be proud of.





# Portaventura World

By Emma Davidson



One of the largest holiday and family leisure destinations in Europe, PortAventura World is located in the idyllic setting of Catalonia's Costa Daurada, Spain. It is a strategic location as it is very close to two large economic centres, Tarragona and Barcelona, as well as towns such as Vila-seca, Salou and Cambrils.

The park's mission has been simple from the start - it aims to be the best international destination resort, which serves as a benchmark for all of Europe, while also providing families and young people with unforgettable experiences in a unique setting characterised by adventure, emotion, and imagination.

Throughout its 27-year history, the park has welcomed over 90 million visitors from all over the world spanning its PortAventura Park, Caribe Aquatic Park and Ferrari Land. The entire complex operates five, 4-star themed hotels and one, 5-star hotel, with more than 2,300 rooms, and, in addition, it is home to the PortAventura Convention Centre, with capacity for up to 6,000 people.

PortAventura Park covers 105 hectares and is divided into six themed areas. As the park's birthplace and home, is by the Mediterranean Sea visitors and friends are firstly welcomed upon the shores of Mediterrània.

The area of Mediterrània is themed with reproductions of buildings typically found in Mediterranean villages. The professionals and artists





involved in its design and creation have strived for a perfect likeness in every detail, and visitors can appreciate the results of their hard work as they pass through the different zones of the first theme area that they come to upon arrival at the park.

From this, guests can then take an intriguing journey through the beautiful islands of Polynesia, a space surrounded by streams that flow over volcanic rocks, making the visitor feel like they are in a tropical paradise with fun attractions and exciting shows. The main rides in Polynesia are Tutuki Splash, wagons that drop rapidly from the summit of the volcano down to the lake, and the Kontiki canoes that navigate the Polynesian islands on the tumultuous sea waves.

Guests are then presented with the option to explore colourful and lively México, exotic China, or the perilous yet fascinating Far West, as well as SésamoAventura, a place specially designed for young children.

In the Far West themed area, visitors can experience the hustle and bustle of the streets of Penitence, an authentic old American West town, and visit the mining district of the 'C.C. Sampling & Ore Company', which scours the waters of the Colorado river in the search for gold nuggets. There is also the opportunity to pop by the wooden buildings offering all kinds of games of skill and chance, while children and younger family members can take a ride on board the carousel.

The main rides in Far West include roller coaster Stampida and Silver River Flume, one of PortAventura Park's most popular attractions. The highly popular Sesame Street characters are then waiting to greet visitors in SésamoAventura, the PortAventura Park family area where children are







centre stage. All 11 attractions in this area have been specially designed and created for children from the age of one and above.

Ferrari Land, the theme park dedicated to the Prancing Horse, has turned PortAventura World into the European destination with the largest number of theme parks within an area of 70,000sqm. It hosts 16 exciting attractions in an adrenaline-filled space created with a significant technological bias, suitable for all members of the family.

You then have Caribe Aquatic Park, PortAventura's water park, which is an impressive area of 50,000sqm and offers 14 attractions that guarantee fun for the whole family in a picturesque, tropical setting that recreates the lush vegetation of the exotic islands. In addition, visitors can enjoy a wide range of great cuisine at its four restaurants.

Across the entire PortAventura Park, visitors will find a total of 42 attractions for all ages and more than 40 daily performances. They are also treated to 47 food and beverage outlets, where they can sample a range of dishes from each continent with products imported from the very regions represented in PortAventura World.

Gastronomy, a cornerstone of PortAventura World's offer, integrates a sustainable approach with the aim of continuing to promote the best experience for visitors through healthier options such as plant-based, vegan food. In the fully renovated Bora Bora self-service restaurant, poke bowls, stir fries, and smoothies are available to guests who are dining in for the evening.

New additions to the range of cuisine will reflect a commitment to current trends and includes the integration of fusion cuisine, healthy dishes, and bio and organic products, as well as those suitable for people

with a gluten intolerance. Along these lines, exclusively vegetarian, vegan, and flexitarian menus and buffets will be added to the offer.

It is an experience that awakens all five senses of the diners. Sight – to enjoy the vivid colours of the food, through which different atmospheres are created every day. Sound – to connect and interact with the waiting staff. Smell – to relish multiple aromas and enjoy the show cooking demonstrations; and, of course, taste and touch – to appreciate the flavours and textures.

For PortAventura World it is very important to offer a large selection of first-rate products and creations that satisfy all tastes. For this reason, the park has designed different areas in which it is possible to discover diverse experiences. In the Boulangerie, diners will find a varied selection of breads, cereals, Catalan pizzas, preserves, cheeses and pastries, perfect for an energy-filled start to the day.

A total of 44 shops are available to browse throughout PortAventura Park, too, with hundreds of fashionable items, handicrafts, souvenirs, photographic memories, sweets and more merchandise featuring the park's friends from Sesame Street.

Recently, PortAventura World announced a new strategic line in its hospitality offering with the purchase and management of Hotel Atenea Aventura, located in the municipality of Vila-seca, less than two kilometres away from the resort. With this move, PortAventura World will manage, for the first time, the operations of a hotel outside the current perimeter of the resort.

Hotel Atenea Aventura, a four-star establishment, has 94 standard rooms and apartments, which will also strengthen the resort's hotel

offering for the corporate events audience that comes to PortAventura Convention Centre throughout the year. Until now, the hotel has mainly housed business and wellness clients and PortAventura World visitors.

The company hopes to make progress on this new accommodation model with other hotels in the area, as part of an expansion plan that spans across the coming years and supports and improves the value proposition of PortAventura World, which now has six establishments under its management with a total of almost 2,500 rooms. The new strategy seeks to adapt the accommodation and update its offer with tickets to the park and other benefits.

Across the three parks guests find an attractive line-up of thrilling rides and roller coasters that see guests flocking back year on year. For example, the Red Force is an ample ride that accelerates to 180km/h in only five seconds and reaches a height of 112-metres making it a veritable experience for Formula One fans and speed lovers; while Furios Baco is a roller coaster on which passengers hurtle from zero-135km/h in only three seconds.

Dragon Khan, one of the most iconic attractions in PortAventura Park and often frequented by the more daring of visitors, has eight loop-the-loops, reaching zero gravity through a corkscrew effect and with a dizzying drop from 45-metres high at speeds of up to 100km/h. Shambhala, the emblematic ride, holds three European records; highest roller coaster at 76-metres, longest descent with a drop of 78-metres and fastest hyper coaster reaching speeds of 134km/h.

Finally, Street Mission, the resort's first dark ride and the only one in Europe dedicated to Sesame Street, is an interactive adventure for all ages in which visitors must help the main protagonist, Detective Grover, successfully complete a secret mission.

More recently, between 2021 and 2022, Portaventura World welcomed a new gastronomic experience, Delion, a concept that combines three main ingredients; emotion, quality and passion.



Delion, a name that comes from the fusion of 'delicious' and 'emotion', is the innovative culinary experience that clients can find in three of the resort hotels; Hotel PortAventura, Hotel Colorado Creek and Hotel Gold River. In this way, it transfers to the gastronomic landscape of the hotels and the experiences felt in the different worlds of the park, so that users are immersed in a 360° experience, from breakfast until dinner.

Delion offers a wide variety of dishes prepared using fresh, local, and high-quality products, presented in an innovative and creative way.

Throughout the year, Portaventura World hosts several events and celebrations to commemorate particular holidays. Every year for Halloween, from the end of September until mid-November, the streets and corners of the theme park are filled with monsters, zombies and ghosts prowling between the attractions, turning the visitor experience into a spine-chilling day out for the whole family.







Christmas also sees the park transform from late November to early January, as all areas of the resort are decked with ornaments and lights, with the starring roles going to the park's mascots. All the shows are transformed to enchant the entire family, and restaurants have typical seasonal menus on offer throughout the period, with hotel decorations also filling the atmosphere with Christmas spirit.

On a social level, the PortAventura Foundation will this year, once again welcome 200 vulnerable families with children and young people that are dealing with a serious illness in its Dreams Village, as part of their recovery therapy, and will continue to hold iconic events such as its charity race, which celebrates its 10th edition this year, and its annual charity dinner for the financing of social projects in the Tarragona area.

The PortAventura Foundation is the entity that channels and promotes all PortAventura World's social actions that make up its corporate responsibility policy. Since 2011, the Foundation has worked with 1,246 related organisations and has given out aid to the value of €8.5m through numerous projects. In addition, more than 60,000 children and young people at risk of exclusion due to health problems, disability or financial problems have benefited from the various programmes.

Its activities focus on four areas of action; charity days in PortAventura Park to raise awareness among visitors and raise funds for other organisations, own fundraising events to promote charity projects, accessibility to leisure and direct contributions to projects. In 2014, PortAventura Foundation donated €3m to the Sant Joan de Déu Hospital to fund the construction of the hospital's new paediatric ICU, which has been up and running since 2018.

Looking to next season, PortAventura World is working on a new digital attraction and advancements for the park in the form of a new LaLiga sports bar.

The innovative work on the LaLiga TwentyNine's sports bar has been created within the framework of the joint venture signed between the

company, LaLiga, and Kosmos to generate innovative content in the world of entertainment. This is the world's first LaLiga-themed restaurant, which offers visitors quality cuisine combined with the enjoyment of live sports competitions, as well as an eSports area.

The Beat Challenge video game, which is currently being updated, will also play a fundamental role in PortAventura World's digital leisure offer this season, as an ideal immersive experience for football lovers that transcends the physical borders of the resort due to disruptive technology. With the goal of half a million active users by the end of the year, so far, the project has been well-received by lovers of the park and football alike.

Digitalisation will continue to be another of the resort's strategic business pillars in the coming months, backed by ongoing initiatives such as the acceptance of Bitcoin payments in hotels, making it the first resort in Europe to accept cryptocurrencies and whose platform will be finalised soon, and the update of its official website, which will incorporate new products and a change in aesthetics.

There's no denying that PortAventura World is a vast theme park that serves as a welcome escape from reality, set in one of the most picturesque corners of the world. Looking to the future, the park is aiming to continue to endorse a clear strategy in terms of sustainability, social commitment, and good governance, striving to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Along these lines, for the rest of the year the resort plans to join relevant initiatives such as the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), a project headed by, among others, the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), and the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). By joining this initiative, the company will set itself ambitious science-based climate targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming to below 1.5°C. In turn, PortAventura World will continue to offset its remaining scope one and two emissions to remain an operational neutral resort.

PortAventura World also announced this summer that it has been granted a licence to build the largest self-consumption photovoltaic plant in a holiday resort in Spain, and one of the largest in Europe: PortAventura Solar.

The project, designed and built by Endesa X, involves the installation of 11,102 ground mounted solar panels that will occupy an area of 6.4 hectares, equivalent to nine football fields, within the resort. The solar plant will have a capacity of 6.05-megawatt peak (MWp), enabling PortAventura World to generate 10 GWh/year of clean electricity and cover almost a third of its energy needs, in line with its commitment to environmental sustainability. The Department of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda of the Government of Catalonia, and the Tourist Recreation Centre (CRT) of Vila-seca and Salou have given the green light to the project, both administratively and in terms of the building permit.



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# The Six Flags Shuffle

By Dennis Spiegel



Six Flags Magic Mountain © Jeremy Thompson

No, it's not a dance! I wish it was. The current Six Flags shuffle is about the extraordinary changes that the recent CEO, Selim Bassoul, has introduced in his first nine months on the job.

Let me say from the outset, I do not know Selim Bassoul and I have not yet had the opportunity to meet him. I have, however, followed his movements and company transitions since his arrival at Six Flags.

I have been amazed to see some of his early pronouncements, declarations, and actions at the Six Flags organisation. Early upon his arrival, he undertook what seemed to be a 'Theme Park 101' tour of the company's parks. He ate 200 slices of pizza; ate over 100 hamburgers; and 100 orders of park chicken tenders. He checked out bathrooms, commented on toilet paper (thickness/ply sheets), and wondered why guests were pouring their drinks in bushes around the park?

He also stated in his early announcement he was going to bring the magic back to the parks. He was going to harness the existing creativity of his staff to build guest satisfaction and financial growth. He stated that he was excited and passionate about empowering his staff to join him in serving the guests at new levels of success.

One of his early pronouncements was that he believed the Six Flags parks have plenty of existing rides, attractions, and equipment to serve the guests. He said there was plenty of current capacity and that capital could be saved on not adding new attractions. Now, all of us in the industry know that our business depends on repeat visitation, and repeat visitation is driven by capital expenditures and by introducing

new attractions. This should be done on a planned schedule throughout the organisation. To make a statement of this importance on a company's necessary requirements, I found very neophyte, lacking total understanding of what the theme park business is about.

Early in this short tenure, Bassoul began making numerous staff changes. Since his arrival, seven park presidents have announced their retirement or contracts terminated. In addition to losing significant leadership at the top positions within Six Flags, it was rumored in early August that over 200+ mid-management personnel were on the "chopping block." This is a tremendous amount of depth and experience to remove from an organisation in a short period of time, and while the CEO is in a learning process about the company and the industry.

Bassoul has also indicated that he wants to premiumise the company, increase the quality of its demography, and attract higher caliber guests. He wants to dramatically cut back on the season pass holder and membership categories, drawing back the family visit who is perceived to spend more money in the park.

It is interesting to note that, when you examine Six Flags' attendance over the last 10 years, you find that there has not been any organic growth at its parks. Jim Reid-Anderson, a previous CEO, spent six years positioning the Six Flags season pass program to increase attendance and



Six Flags St Louis Supergirl Sky Flyer © Six Flags



in-park spending. His plan cannibalised the other attendance ticket segments by moving them out of existing categories into the Six Flags season pass program. The season pass sales rose to an incredibly large percentage of the company's total attendance. In my estimation, too high! "Too many eggs in one basket", as it is said. I believe this to be true at Six Flags.

These are just a few of the issues that have created problematic concerns for Six Flags. In my opinion, the lack of leadership at the top, the seemingly ever-changing CEO position, and the revolving staff for over a decade have collectively created a serious lack of direction within the company. Bassoul's predecessor, Mike Spanos, was at the helm for approximately two years. During his tenure, there was no traction on any programs in the company during his term. In fairness to Spanos, he took the reins of the company during the worst period our industry has ever known... Covid! To make that situation on his arrival worse, he too was new to the industry and did not have any in-depth knowledge of how the metrics of our "industry machine" operates. He made no indelible mark on Six Flags. His arrival and departure were without observance. The company needs leadership that understands the basics, and the mechanics of how the leisure, theme park, and water park industry functions. It needs leadership that understands the basics that have been laid during our industry's last 67 years of operation.

Now, let me say, I have always believed that change is good. But change requires understanding of where you have come from to clearly understand where you want to go. Six Flags has lost its entrepreneurial foundation through the last 25 years. The company was built on entrepreneurial spirit like so many other companies entering the business in the early years. As the public entertainment companies entered the industry, you could feel the entrepreneurial spirit begin to diminish. This not only happened at Six Flags, but other park operating companies have experienced the same loss.

Looking back at our industry, please keep in mind that the small family parks and the privately-owned and operated parks around the world at one time were the backbone of



Six Flags Fiesta Texas Batman © Six Flags

our industry. They were guiding lights that steered and grew our industry. These parks were equally important in defining the growth and foundation of the IAAPA, our global association. The entrepreneurs were the leaders.

So, what does Six Flags necessitate currently in its 61 years of existence? Basically, continuity and stability in its future course of direction. Experience in the CEO's knowledge of our business and industry, supported by qualified, experienced individuals in the field positions who can execute and call the necessary audibles required to meet the daily challenges.

It appears a person from the restaurant equipment arena who was responsible for selling microwaves, washing machines, and stoves may have encountered situations where customers do not buy these types of equipment on a short term, reoccurring basis. But the theme park customer does expect to find new attractions and new product experiences when they return. This is what keeps them coming back.

"Theme Park 101" is important for all of us in the business to recognise and understand, short and long term. By having this education, a lot of miscalculations and mistakes can be avoided. The jury is still out on Bassoul and his strategic approach to understanding and guiding Six Flags through one of its darkest periods. We wish the company good luck, as well as Bassoul. Time will tell.

#### About ITPS

*Dennis Spiegel, past Chairman of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), is Founder & CEO of International Theme Park Services, Inc. (ITPS), where "FUN IS A SERIOUS BUSINESS." ITPS is globally the leisure industry's leading independent, full-service consulting firm. Located in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA, ITPS is uniquely qualified to assist in all aspects of entertainment project development, and has worked on over 500 projects in over 50 countries since its inception in 1983. The corporate website is <http://www.interthemepark.com> and the staff can be reached by email at [itps@interthemepark.com](mailto:itps@interthemepark.com)*



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## Victoria Lynn

### Victoria Lynn, Drayton Manor's Managing Director

**InterPark** Editor Beth Whitaker sits down with Drayton Manor's first-ever female Managing Director, Victoria Lynn to see how she's adjusting to life in the UK after 20+ years working in the Middle East amusement market.

**Beth Whitaker: When did you first start working the parks and attractions industry?**

**Victoria Lynn:** I've worked in the industry for 22 years after starting as a lifeguard in a water park called Wild Wadi in Dubai, UAE. This was intended to be a working holiday for six months, but I fell in love with the industry and started my permanent career in parks and attractions, working in training, operations, business excellence and general park management.

**BW: What have been some of your career highlights?**

**VL:** I've had many highlights throughout my career, including the opportunity to work at several flagship brands and IPs such as Ferrari, Warner Bros, Legoland and Mattel. I've really enjoyed working alongside a multitude of

nationalities and people from all walks of life, as well as collaborating with those from the likes of Disney and Universal.

**BW: What has been one of your proudest moments?**

**VL:** Ferrari World, in Abu Dhabi, has to be my proudest project. Seeing it open with 600,000 visitors in year one, to later achieving one million visitors in just a few years, was amazing. We completely transformed the park from a three-star to a five-star attraction. A key part of this was opening Flying Aces, which had the tallest loop in the world and a lift hill of over 55-metres. We developed a robust training program to ensure the ride could safely be evacuated from the toughest points. It's things like this, the fun parts of operations, that keep me motivated.

**BW: What have been some of the most significant**



**changes within the industry that you have seen?**

**VL:** I've lived in Dubai for more than 20 years and working in the theme parks there is all about having the fastest, the tallest or the best rides and attractions. I think the biggest change for me is how important it is to create entertaining, themed experiences for people. These events have become more and more powerful, which is why it's crucial to have integrated themed lands and entertainment that complement areas within a park or resort. People will come back time and time again for a unique experience and to enjoy something that's different. For example, we know winter festivals and Halloween events are a must, but it's about being creative with it and thinking of new experiences and events for people to enjoy.

nothing like an outdoor park where you really hear that noise and feel the enjoyment in the atmosphere.

**BW:** A question we're asking all of our female interviewees at the moment - the amusements industry has traditionally been dominated by men in leadership positions, how can we encourage more women to aspire towards leadership roles?

**VL:** There are traditionally more men in leadership positions, however I feel that in the UK, people are more supportive of female leadership, which is great. That being said, we're not where we should be as an industry, which is why I'm keen to advocate for female empowerment and like to inspire the next generation

**BW:** How have you seen park guests change within your?

**VL:** Guests demand more value for money; however, they don't mind paying if there is perceived value – so guest experience is fundamental. We have seen that guests have less tolerance for queues, which can be challenging during peak periods. Another huge change is people's eating habits and lifestyles – for example, the rise in people looking for meat-free or vegan options means we also must think differently about food than we may have several years ago.

**BW:** What do you love most about working in the industry?

**VL:** I love hearing screams of joy and laughter - there's







of women in leadership through motivational talks and sessions for people. While a lot of businesses say they support equal opportunities, there's still a lot of work to do in ensuring this is replicated in company culture across the board. For me it's about focusing on your ability and choosing a company that supports you to achieve your full potential, regardless of gender.

**BW: Tell me more about your role at Drayton Manor, how are you hoping to take the park forward?**

**VL:** As one of the UK's top family attractions Drayton Manor Resort is such an amazing leisure destination, with so much potential to grow. We are very lucky to have an excellent owner, The Looping Group, which is providing

funds to continue to expand and improve the resort over the next few years, with very exciting development plans in the pipeline! I have already seen a positive shift in the customer experience since the introduction of our new themed Vikings area, which is a positive sign of what's to come in the future. I love theme parks and I see Drayton Manor Resort as 'the' place to visit for a fun day out in the UK.

**BW: What makes Drayton unique?**

**VL:** We're easily accessible in terms of location – you can reach Drayton Manor from most of the major UK cities by car, train, or bus in two hours or less. We're also home to Europe's only Thomas Land, which is a huge draw for families all over the country. Another thing

that makes Drayton Manor truly unique is that even though it has been open for over 70 years, it still holds many of the values it started with, despite so many other changes throughout those years.

**BW: How do you intend to apply your previous experience within the industry to Drayton?**

**VL:** I have opened many projects, parks and themed attractions throughout my career and have a wealth of experience implementing activations that attract more visitors. My goals are to improve the overall customer experience and ensure that Drayton Manor continues to be a must-visit leisure destination for families.

**BW: How has Covid-19 impacted business?**

**VL:** Business is picking up again, as we'd hoped, and we're seeing stronger attendance and revenue than pre-pandemic years. There has been an interesting shift in guest behaviour when it comes to ticket purchases, with people making last-minute decisions to visit the resort rather than planning and booking further in advance.

**BW: What can we expect from the park moving forward?**

**VL:** We have lots of exciting things planned, thanks to The Looping Group's investment programme. There will be more rides, attractions, unique entertainment offerings, shows and themed areas for guests to enjoy. The resort has had so many positive changes over the last two years, and it has made a huge difference to the overall guest experience, and I would definitely recommend a visit! Watch this space!

## Personally Speaking

**The first album I bought was...** Mariah Carey - Music Box. She is my all-time favourite artist and I've even had the chance to meet her, which was incredible!

**The most interesting place I've ever been is...** I've been lucky enough to travel all over the world – Cape Town is one of my top destinations.

**The last book I read was...** Jeffrey Archer - Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less

**This summer I plan to...** Be on site all summer!

**The person who has influenced me the most is...** Glenn Davidson, a well-known seasoned theme park professional. He has been my mentor since I met him in 2000, and he has given me opportunities to thrive within the industry. He is well-known particularly in the water park industry, and in UAE and the USA.

**If I wasn't working in the amusements industry I would...** be on stage doing motivational talks.





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www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-europe

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Contact: Patty, WWA  
Tel: +1 913 5990300  
Email: patty@waterparks.org  
www.waterparks.org

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GTI GUANGZHOU 2022, Area A, China Import and Export Fair Pahou Complex, Guangzhou, CHINA  
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Family Attraction Expo 2022, NEC Birmingham, UK  
Contact: Fortem International, 33 Colston Ave, Bristol, BS1 4UA UK  
Tel: +44 (0) 2030264418  
www.familyattractionexpo.co.uk

## November 15 – 18

IAAPA Expo, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida, USA  
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA  
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Fax: +1 321 319 7690  
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org  
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo

## November 29 – December 1

MAPIC, Palais des Festivals, Cannes, FRANCE  
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Tel: +33 179 71 95 15  
Email: Daniela.jakovljevic@reedmidem.com  
www.mapic.com

## January 10 – 12 2023

EAG 23, Entertainment, Attractions & Gaming International Expo, ExCel London, UK  
Contact: Swan Events Ltd, Gainsborough House, 15 High Street, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 2RT, UK  
Tel: +44 (0) 1582 767254  
Email: karencooke@swanevents.co.uk  
www.eagexpo.com

## February 2 – 4 2023

Atrax '23. 10th International Amusement – Attraction, Park – Recreation Industry and Services Exhibition. Istanbul Expo Centre, Istanbul, TURKEY  
Contact: Tureks International Fairs co.  
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Email: nergis@tureksfuar.com.tr  
https://atraxexpo.com/en/home/

## May 28 – 30 2023


Saudi Entertainment & Amusement Expo, Riyadh International Convention & Exhibition Centre, Riyadh, SAUDI ARABIA  
Contact: DMG Events  
Tel: +96612 6970287  
Email: marketing@saudientertainmentandamusement.com  
www.saudientertainmentexpo.com

## June 14 – 16 2023

IAAPA Expo Asia 2023, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Marina Bay Sands, SINGAPORE  
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA  
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## June 28 – June 30 2023

10th Events & Amusement Expo Tokyo, Tokyo Big Sight, Tokyo, JAPAN  
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